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ABSTRACT

Whether using cooperative learning can improve the academic achievement of inner city middle school students was studied in Gary, Indiana at a school with a population of 503 students. Two seventh-grade classes taught by 1 African American male teacher served as 1 treatment group of 20 at-risk students and one nontreatment group of 24 high achievers. Both groups took the same pretest on a unit about India. The treatment group was taught using cooperative learning with a form of Jigsaw IV (Holliday, 2002). Students in the treatment group were given expert sheets that they used to teach their teammates after quiz results ensured that they had learned the material. Other quizzes and a review through a quiz bowl competition measured student learning. The last element was an individual assessment administered to both groups. Achievement results indicated that the cooperative learning strategies worked well with this group of at-risk students. The approach acknowledged the ways these students want to learn. Eighteen attachments contain student learning sheets and assessments. (Contains 3 tables and 19 references.) (SLD)

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Using Cooperative Learning to Improve the Academic Achievements of Inner-City Middle School Students

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Using Cooperative Learning to Improve the Academic Achievements of Inner City Middle School Students

Students labeled as "At-Risk" must deal with special challenges and how people perceive these challenges is an important variable in how the child will be treated (Freiman, 2001). They are labeled "At-Risk" because they fall into certain living conditions or personal traits and certain behaviors in school that will make them susceptible to academic failure (Freiman, 2001). Children in poverty, of the homeless, divorced parents, no male role models, who suffer through violent acts, no parents, minorities, refuges, and who are products of drug and alcohol abusers unfortunately fall into this category. The majority of these students live in inner city areas where the cycle of failure is repeated over and over.

What the research says about adolescent students also holds true for inner city adolescent middle school students (Holliday, 2001). They go through the same four stages that any normal adolescent student goes through but in a different environment. The research also states that the best means of reaching these adolescent students academically is to do so through cooperative learning (Holliday, 2001). Therefore, the best means of improving the academic achievement of inner city "At-Risk" adolescent students is for teachers to utilize cooperative learning in their classrooms. This means rethinking what takes place in the classroom and using the developmental stages and cooperative learning to create an environment conducive for success rather than failure (Holliday, 2001).

POPULATION

The purpose of this research is to test the hypothesis: Can Using Cooperative Learning Improve the Academic Achievement of Inner City Middle School Students?

The middle school, where the research took place, is located in Northwest Indiana in the community of Gary, Indiana. The school has a population of 503 students where 97.2% are predominately African-American. 54% or 307 of the students are on free or reduced lunch. The teacher involved in this study is an African American male who has been teaching for two years and currently working on his masters. The two classes are seventh grade social studies classes and consist of one treatment group (of 20 At-Risk students) and one non-treatment group (of 24 high achievers). The students are administered a state test called the ISTEP where 37% meet the state standards for this test.

METHODOLOGY

A control group was used consisting of 24 students of above average grades and taught by a second year teacher of World Geography in his usual format lecture, projects and reports. This group took a pre test on a unit about India and the area called south Asia. The treatment group consisted of 20 at-risk students who had struggled in the class (see table 3 for previous grades). This group also took the same pretest (see table 3 for scores). The treatment group was taught using cooperative learning using a form of Jigsaw IV (Holliday, 2002). The students were asked to be on time for class, as a review quiz would be administered covering the information taught the day before. This satisfied the quiz portion of Jigsaw IV. They were then taught the same information that

was taught the control group. However, they were taught the information not by the teacher (same teacher) but by their classmates using the Jigsaw format. The unit on India was taught over a three-week stretch and both classes used the Internet as well as other resources for their material. The at-risk students were prone not to turn in assignments as homework therefore much of the work was done with their teammates in cooperative groups. Another concern for these students is attendance and therefore, an introductory quiz was given the first five minutes of class during attendance. These quizzes were graded and covered the previous days material and impacted their over all grades.

Students in the treatment group were given expert sheets (table 4) with which they used to learn the material on India and then teach their teammates (Jigsaw II, III, and IV). Students in expert groups answered questions concerning the unit on India by using the Internet, the text (to a degree because textbook was determined to be inadequate), film, literature, and maps. A quiz was given to members of each expert group to assure that the information they collected was accurate (Holliday, 2000). Once they were all in agreement on the answers to the question, the students then left to return to their home team. Once in their home team the students taught their respective expert sheets to their teammates. This second teaching of teammates was followed by a second quiz to assure accuracy again (Holliday, 2000). These were followed each day by a quiz (as mentioned before) during the taking of attendance, to assure student arrived on time or at all. These quizzes were followed by a whole class review via a quiz bowl where the teams were matched against each other to vie for bonus points. The last element was the individual assessment administered to both groups. A team average was calculated weekly (based

on expert quizzes and daily quizzes) and the unit assessment and the highest average team were rewarded with a treat.

RESULTS

The students' initial grades, of both groups, prior to the research can be found in table three. The treatment students were placed in groups according to their previous academic results. The lower achieving class showed more academically unsuccessful students than academically successful students (table 1). The result is the control students being entirely academically successfully (as expected) showed that they learned the material on the unit India. The treatment group students (whose previous success rate was 11 out of 20 students succeeding) saw the student success rate, for this unit, rise to 16 out of 20 students successfully passing the unit (table three). This previous rationale for student failure was lack of attendance and work not being turned in to the teacher. Students previously missed as many as 27 assignments during a grading period, which assured failure. The students who passed saw no "A's" and only three "B's" but still missed double-digit assignments affecting their grades. On chart nine the indication under cooperative learning the missing assignments were reduced to half the previous totals. This improved scores and saw an "A" being achieved as well as "B's". The number of academically successful students increased to 16 out of 20. The unsuccessful students still had the most assignments not turned in and the greatest attendance problems. Now this in itself is not unheard of, since if you do not do home work or attend class it is hard to be successful. However the number of students that did improve directly due to the use of the cooperative learning strategy Jigsaw IV is not. These students once they leave school for the day as a rule do not do homework or turn assignments. Since there is little

or no home support to do insist on he working, getting these students to learn while at school rather than on their own for homework is the key. Therefore, teachers must teach the way the at-risk students operate not the way that is normally taught.

CONCLUSIONS

The research literature on at risk students is plentiful (Swedner &Lubeck, 1995; Werner, 1996; Wolin & Wolin, 1993; Mason & Mason, 2001; Hunter, 1984; Freiman, 2001). It states that there are many reasons for being at risk and there are many things teachers can do to help them. The most important thing that can be utilized to assist at risk inner city students is to change what teachers do in the classrooms. The competition between teams, historically unified teams but it also instilled in members a want to attend regularly (improving attendance). The group work historically assured that students became dependant on each other. Jigsaw IV (Holliday, 2000) met this criteria and assured that students had the right answers and did the work (even if done in class). Peer pressure to perform even in the classroom is a great motivator. Therefore, it is the finding of this research that the utilization of the cooperative learning strategies work and work well with inner city students who are at risk. However, if teachers do not use this methodology and teach as they always have taught, these students would never taste the sweet nectar of success. It is imperative that teachers teach the way these students learn and operate rather than teach, as they want the students to learn. If attendance is a problem or lack of work fails students then opportunities should be given to do the work in class as opposed to insisting on homework where research class projects are not supported at home. Cooperative learning can and will help inner city students succeed but must be implemented in order to achieve success. Teachers need to realize that "IF WE

ALWAYS DO WHAT WE HAVE ALWAYS DONE, WE WILL ALWAYS GET WHAT WE ALWAYS GOT".

TABLE 1

Group Members

	Group "A"	Group "B"	Group "C"	Group "D"
1.	Jacqueline	Janessa	Tiara	Antonio
2.	Jericho	Latasha	India	Marquittius
3.	Tasheiala	Ronald	Mauritinia	Brittany
4.	Clifton	Earlton	Mott	Robert
5.	Shane	Shunta	Maxine	Kenneth

Teams will decide on a team name the first class period

Weekly team averages and improvement averages to decide reward winners at the end of nine-week period.

	Name Starting Average	Pre-test average	3 wk average	Improvement
1.	Team One/75	7/50	78	+3
2.	Team Two/79	14/50	71	-8
3.	Team Three/70	8/50	70	0
4.	Team Four/60	10/50	63	+3

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plans for 7th Grade Social studies class at Kennedy-King Middle School

Teacher: McCollum/Holliday	Chapter 22 India	3rd Nine weeks

Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.

Day 1

Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: Demonstrate their prior knowledge of India by taking a pretest	1. In a whole group setting Students will be administered individually a pretest on India. 2. Students who finish early will read Section One	50 minutes	Allow for one copy of the unit pretest for each

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Teacher: McCollum/Holliday Chapter 22 India 3rd Nine weeks

Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.

Day 2

Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: Work cooperatively in a small group setting.	1.Students will be placed in pre-arranged cooperative groups 2.Students will review with teacher the handout on the elements of cooperative learning. 3. Students will rehearse the procedures for cooperative learning activities.	1. 5 minutes 2. 30 minutes 3. 20 minutes	Each student will be given a copy of the handout elements of cooperative learning and the rules and procedures.

Teacher: McCollum/Holliday Chapter 22 India 3rd Nine weeks

Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.

Day 3

Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: Demonstrate their ability to work in small cooperative groups	1.Students in small pre-arranged cooperative groups take a warm up quiz after second bell. 2.Students will review and practice the small cooperative group skills in their respective groups. 3. Students in their groups will begin to work cooperatively on their expert sheets.	1. 5 minutes 2. 30 minutes 3. 20 minutes	1.One quiz for each group (4 groups). 2. Set of cooperative skills on sheets for each group. 3. Expert sheets for each group.

Lesson Plans for 7th Grade Social studies class at Kennedy-King Middle School

Teacher: McCollum/Holliday Chapter 22 India 3rd Nine weeks

Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.

Day 4

Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: analyze the country of India using the five themes of Geography.	1.Students in small pre-arranged cooperative groups will take a warm up quiz after second bell. 2.Students will review and discuss the five themes of geography in small cooperative groups. 3. Students in their groups will continue to work cooperatively on their expert sheets.	1. 5 minutes 2. 30 minutes 3. 20 minutes	1.One quiz for each group (4 groups). 2. Set of themes for geography for each group. 3. Expert sheets for each group.

Teacher: McCollum/Holliday Chapter 22 India 3rd Nine weeks

Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.

Day 5

Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: analyze the country of India using the five themes of Geography.	1.Students in small pre-arranged cooperative groups will take a warm up quiz after second bell. 2.Students will review and discuss location, place and region of India in small cooperative groups. 3. Students in their groups will continue to work cooperatively on their expert sheets.	1. 5 minutes 2. 30 minutes 3. 20 minutes	1.One quiz for each group (4 groups). 2. Set of sheets on location, place and region of India for each group. 3. Expert sheets for each group.

Lesson Plans for 7th Grade Social studies class at Kennedy-King Middle School

Teacher: McCollum/Holliday Chapter 22 India 3rd Nine weeks

Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.

Day 6

Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: analyze the country of India using the five themes of Geography.	1.Students in small pre-arranged cooperative groups will take a warm up quiz after second bell. 2.Students will review and discuss location of India in small cooperative groups. 3. Students in their groups will continue to work cooperatively on their expert sheets.	1. 5 minutes 2. 30 minutes 3. 20 minutes	1.One quiz for each group (4 groups). 2. Set of sheets on location, of India for each group. 3. Expert sheets for each group.

Lesson Plans for 7th Grade Social studies class at Kennedy-King Middle School

Teacher: McCollum/Holliday Chapter 22 India 3rd Nine weeks

Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.

Day 7

Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: analyze the country of India using the five themes of Geography.	1.Students in small pre-arranged cooperative groups will take a warm up quiz after second bell. 2.Students will review and discuss place of India in small cooperative groups. 3. Students in their groups will continue to work cooperatively on their expert sheets.	1. 5 minutes 2. 30 minutes 3. 20 minutes	1.One quiz for each group (4 groups). 2. Set of sheets on place of India for each group. 3. Expert sheets for each group.

Lesson Plans for 7th Grade Social studies class at Kennedy-King Middle School

Teacher: McCollum/Holliday Chapter 22 India 3rd Nine weeks

Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.

Day 8

Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: analyze the country of India using the five themes of Geography.	1.Students in small pre-arranged cooperative groups will take a warm up quiz after second bell. 2.Students will review and discuss region of India in small cooperative groups. 3. Students in their groups will continue to work cooperatively on their expert sheets.	1. 5 minutes 2. 30 minutes 3. 20 minutes	1.One quiz for each group (4 groups). 2. Set of sheets on region of India for each group. 3. Expert sheets for each group.

Lesson Plans for 7th Grade Social studies class at Kennedy-King Middle School

Teacher: McCollum/Holliday	Chapter 22 India	3rd Nine weeks

Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.

Day 9

Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: their knowledge of India by competing in a short quiz bowl review on place location and region of India.	1.Students in small pre-arranged cooperative groups participate in a review game on the place, location and region of India.	1. 50 minutes	1.score sheet for teams

Lesson Plans for 7th Grade Social studies class at Kennedy-King Middle School

Teacher: McCollum/Holliday	Chapter 22 India		3rd Nine weeks
Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.			
Day 10			
Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: their knowledge of India by completing a short quiz on place location and region of India.	1. Students individually will complete a quiz on place location and region on India worth 25 points.	1. 50 minutes	1.one quiz for each student

Teacher: McCollum/Holliday	Chapter 22 India		3rd Nine weeks
Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.			
Day 11			
Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: analyze the country of India using the five themes of Geography.	1.Students in small pre-arranged cooperative groups will take a warm up quiz after second bell. 2.Students will review and discuss environmental impact and movement of India in small cooperative groups. 3. Students in their groups will continue to work cooperatively on their expert sheets.	1. 5 minutes 2. 30 minutes 3. 20 minutes	1.One quiz for each group (4 groups). 2. Set of sheets on region of India for each group. 3. Expert sheets for each group.

Teacher: McCollum/Holliday	Chapter 22 India		3rd Nine weeks
Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.			
Day 12			
Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: analyze the country of India historically.	1.Students in small pre-arranged cooperative groups will take a warm up quiz after second bell. 2.Students will review and discuss the historical impact of European domination of India in small cooperative groups. 3. Students in their groups will continue to work cooperatively on their expert sheets.	1. 5 minutes 2. 30 minutes 3. 20 minutes	1.One quiz for each group (4 groups). 2. Set of sheets on history of India for each group. 3. Expert sheets for each group.

Teacher: McCollum/Holliday Chapter 22 India 3rd Nine weeks

Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.

Day 13

Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: analyze the country of India historically.	1.Students in small pre-arranged cooperative groups will take a warm up quiz after second bell. 2.Students will review and discuss the historical importance of the following Indians: Gandhi, Aryans and Dravidians in small cooperative groups. 3. Students in their groups will continue to work cooperatively on their expert sheets.	1. 5 minutes 2. 30 minutes 3. 20 minutes	1.One quiz for each group (4 groups). 2. Set of sheets on history of India for each group. 3. Expert sheets for each group.

Lesson Plans for 7th Grade Social Studies class at Kennedy-King Middle School

Teacher: McCollum/Holliday	Chapter 22 India		3rd Nine weeks
Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.			
Day 14			
Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: demonstrate their knowledge of India's history by competing in a short quiz bowl.	1. Students in small cooperative groups will compete a quiz bowl on India.	1. 50 minutes	

Lesson Plans for 7th Grade Social studies class at Kennedy-King Middle School

Teacher: McCollum/Holliday	Chapter 22 India		3rd Nine weeks
Goal: Improve student academic performance in the classroom through cooperative learning.			
Day 10			
Objective	Activity	Time	Material
SWBAT: their knowledge of India by completing a unit exam on India.	1. Students individually will complete an exam on India worth 100 points.	1. 50 minutes	1.one exam for each student

Table Four
Expert Sheet on Location

1. What is absolute Location? and what is India's absolute location?

2) What is relative location and what is India's relative location.

3. On the map provided locate the following:

Himalayas
Ganges River
Deccan Plateau
Calcutta
New Delhi
Mumbi (Bombay)
Pakistan
Nepal
Bhutan
Bangladesh
Sri Lanka
Islamabad
Katmandu
Thimphu
Dhaka
Karakdram Mtns.

Expert sheet on Place
What is this Place like?

1. What is the primary language of India?

2. What are the two major religions of India? How are they similar and How are they different?

3. What is the Climate like? What natural disasters annually interrupt life in India?

4. What is India's greatest concern for its people? What is daily life like in India?

TABLE FIVE

Expert Sheet on Human impact and environment

How has man changed the landscape and environment?

1) What agricultural crops are grown in India? What is mined in India and the area around it?

2) What does the economy of India and the surrounding area depend on? How has unemployment affected the area?

3) What types of occupations are represented here in this area?

4) What sort of entertainment is allowed and what is not and why?

5) What important crops are produced in this area? What are kumkum and bindi?

Expert Sheet on Movement and Region

1) How are the countries in this region Similar? How are they different?

	Similar	Different
India		
Pakistan		
Nepal		
Bhutan		
Sri Lanka		
Maldives		

2) What are the usual forms of travel in this area? How has the population explosion affected this area?

3) What turmoil between India and Pakistan is taking place over what area of land?

4) What form of government is representative of each country of the area? Why does each exist and who is in control?

Expert Sheet on the History of the Area

1) What European Countries fought over this area of the world? Who won out and controlled the area?

2) What was the Mogul period and what did they bring to the area?

3) Who were the Aryans and the Dravidians? What is the importance of the Indus River valley and the Ganges River to the area?

4) Why did Europeans go to the area?

5) Who is Mohandas Gandhi and what role did he play in Indian History?

Expert sheet on Sociology and Psychology

1) What is a caste system? What role does each member of the caste perform?

2) What is the rank of each and who were the untouchables?

Table3
Student Progress Over Study

Student	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Pretest	Posttest
Tiara	80	104	108	12/50	44/50
Janessa	81	74	77	6/50	29/50
Jacqueline	84	66	77	9/50	42/50
Antonio	73	78	72	10/50	34/50
Marquittius	72	98	80	5/50	29/50
India	71	67	70	0/50	31/50
Latasha	66	50	49	15/50	N.A.
Jericho	65	64	62	8/50	24/50
Brittany	63	84	67	6/50	29/50
Mauritina	61	77	79	5/50	28/50
Ronald	67	63	66	11/50	n/a
Tasheiala	60	72	82	6/50	44/50
Clifton	59	64	67	8/50	26/50
Earlton	57	60	63	7/50	25/50
Mott	57	64	65	5/50	28/50
Robert	54	49	65	n/a	32/50
Shane	52	48	56	6/50	26/50
Shunta	51	56	59	6/50	21/50
Maxine	49	48	56	23/50	n/a
Kenneth	46	62	63	7/50	27/50
Average	63	68	69	7.5	32

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